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Enroll Now in the Five-Minute University! Knowledge and Diplomas for Only Twenty Bucks!

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Enroll Now in the Five-Minute University! Knowledge and Diplomas for Only Twenty Bucks!

This week, for your viewing pleasure, a short video on teaching and learning from that education expert, Father Guido Sarducci. You can find it on YouTube with the title "Father Guido Sarducci's Five Minute University." It is just under four minutes long, and here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO8x8eoU3L4&list=RDkO8x8eoU3L4&index=1>

I urge you to watch it, but here is a summary (imagine I am writing this with a fake Italian accent while wearing a priest's robe and holding a burning cigarette):

Most people take a foreign language. If you take Spanish, you have to learn "¿Cómo está usted?" and the answer, "Muy bien." Five years after you take Spanish, that is all you will remember, so why waste time, he asks, on conjugation and vocabulary and all that crap?

For economics, all you

have to learn is "supply and demand," and know that a business buys something, then sells it for more.

He will also have a theology class. The theological question is "Where is God?" The answer is "God is everywhere."

Then after a short spring break, you have final exams, during which you answer those three questions. And then you graduate. In that rented cap and gown. And then you get a Polaroid picture.

Ridiculous, of course. Or is it? Let me think back to some of my college classes. What do I remember from them?

I took chemistry as a freshman. Here is all I remember: Boyle's Law and Charles's Law. Just the names. I think at least one of them had something to do with gas, but that is all I recall.

I took geology my sophomore year. The first

thing I remember is igneous rocks, which I know are volcanic. But I learned the major rock groups in high school (sedimentary, metamorphic, Beatles, Stones). Did I learn anything else in that college class? Yes. Drumlins. They are hills formed by glacial action. (But I think I remember that because of Robert Frost's poem "Drumlin Woodchuck." I remember when I read the Frost poem and connected the title to my geology class. That was actually a bit exciting!)

I also took botany. I vaguely recall some word about the shape of leaves, but all I really remember from botany is that I nearly sliced one of my fingers off in botany lab one day and had to go get stitches.

I made an "A" in European history, but all that comes to mind now is "Charlemagne." No dates, and nothing about him. Just the name.

How about my music theory class? I remember "appoggiatura."

“All of our students take CRTW 201, our required course in critical thinking, and they all learn our version of the elements of thinking. Two of the ten elements are information and concepts. I tell my students that most students focus on one element of this pair, and that most professors focus on the other. They know immediately whose focus is where.”



Continued from page 1

Something about a grace note in the melody. I remember it because I liked the sound of the word. (But I just had to look it up to spell it. Two “p’s” and two “g’s”—no wonder I liked it!)

I am exaggerating a bit, but not really that much. Think back to the courses you took, especially the ones not in your major. What do you remember about each one? I will be surprised if you come up with much more than I did.

What does that tell us about the way our students learn and about the way we teach?

After I graduated from college, if I wanted to refresh my memory about something I had learned, I could go to the textbook, if I kept it, or I could look in an encyclopedia. Our students who graduated five years ago who want to remember something about our courses can just pull out their phones. The whole university, whole libraries, are on those phones. Five years from now, will all that information be on a chip implanted subcutaneously? (Hey, I learned that word in biology!)

• Our students focus on facts, discrete bits of knowledge. If we focus on

discrete bits of knowledge too, if we only teach facts, there is very little chance our students will go beyond the surface to deep learning. And they will forget those discrete bits, and forget them much quicker than five years.

All of our students take CRTW 201, our required course in critical thinking, and they all learn our version of the elements of thinking. Two of the ten elements are information and concepts. I tell my students that most students focus on one element of this pair, and that most professors focus on the other. They know immediately whose focus is where.

Then I tell them the best change they can make in their approach to learning is to shift from thinking about their courses as information--as facts, names, dates, data—to thinking about their courses as a set of concepts, of ideas. In five or ten years, much of the information in a discipline will change. The concepts remain the same for much longer.

I have them take out a textbook from one of their classes and read the chapter headings. They immediately see that the book, and the course, is

made up of a progression of concepts. And that if they learn the concepts, really learn the concepts, master the concepts, they will master the course.

So, if you want to avoid what Father Sarducci satirizes, think concepts, concepts, concepts. Arrivederci! (I just had to look up how to spell that...)

The deadline for proposals for the 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning just passed, and this year’s conference promises to be even better than the first two. On Saturday, February 6, 2016, we will have a full day of presentations and workshops on a variety of topics, with participants from Winthrop and other area colleges and universities. Registration will open soon, so watch for details. We will have a luncheon, and our keynote speaker will be Dr. Dan Mahony. Please make plans now to join us for an excellent learning and sharing opportunity.



Thanks For Helping Make the Teaching and Learning Center Work!

Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide variety of sessions each year for faculty and staff, on teaching, technology, professional development, and personal development. From leading class discussion to mastering the Smart podium to tenure and promotion to cooking soufflés, the TLC tries to make sure that all faculty and staff receive

the kinds of professional and personal development that will make them better teachers, administrators, and employees.

To offer this programming, the TLC depends on the talent, expertise, and generosity of our faculty and staff. We do not have a big budget to bring in outside speakers and experts. Even so, we are able to offer engaging,

timely, and valuable sessions every year on a variety of topics. We thank those who have offered their time and talent in past years.

If you have a request for a session you would like to see, please email me and I will try to arrange it. And if you have a session you would like to present, please email me. We will set something up as soon as we can!

A Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The TLC for several years has been offering a service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me (803) 323-3679 or birdj@winthrop.edu.

Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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The 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning

Save the date! Saturday, February 6, 2016 we will have our 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning. Registration will open soon—stay tuned...

Thought For the Week

"I am not one of those who in expressing opinions confine themselves to facts. I don't know anything that mars good literature so completely as too much truth."
--Mark Twain